Alcohol is Never the Answer

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Alcohol is Never the Answer

by Azure_K_Mello

Summary

When Will is at a crime he gets a call about one of his brothers. It irritates him.

It was two weeks later, when Will was still on drugs but allowed to be by himself, that he'd gone to see Hannibal at his office. Hannibal held out a note book and said, "What does this look like?"

Will squinted and said, "A crescent moon, maybe?"

"Not a clock?" asked Hannibal.

"That's what I drew?"

"That is what you drew. Now you understand why I wanted to get you to a neurologist within hours. Something was clearly wrong. I will not lie — I was scared for you — but it had been a month since you had noticed a problem and I wanted you to see a good neurologist not an emergency doctor so we waited six hours."

"Wow."

"So what brings you to my office today? How are your hallucinations?"

"Not as frequent," said Will. "And now I can say: there's no stag; you're not going crazy; your brain is still a little swollen. So it's easier to deal with. I'm not losing time which is a huge relief."

"And nightmares?"

"Yeah. I never used to have nightmares. My sleep has always been my one safe place. Now, without the fever, they aren't as vivid or drenched in sweat."

"Are you still taking the sleep aid?"

"No, interrupted natural sleep is better than drugged sleep. I don't have the insomnia so I'm no longer taking the sleep aid. It's 'as needed' and I don't need it."

"No sleep walking then?"

"No, no sleepwalking. I just came by to say hello and invite you over for dinner. My house has been quieter since you left. The dogs miss you."

"I'll cook. I've been making an interesting beef stew. I'd like to share it with you and I can make it in your kitchen. I can have a visit with the dogs."

"You really don't like letting other people cook for you, do you? I invite you to dinner and instead get delivery."

"I want you to try this stew."

Will laughed, "Okay. What time would be good for you?"

"Eight o'clock?"

“Great,” Will’s cell phone rang and he looked at it. “It’s Jack.”

“Let’s say ten then.”

Will laughed as he picked up the phone.

It was a brutal double homicide, both victims strung up upside-down from the ceiling, tortured and bled out onto their snow white wall to wall carpeting. He and the team were all in protective clothing and shoe booties. He hadn’t started studying the room yet but when Will’s cell phone rang he set it to speaker phone. He didn’t want to place it to his ear incase the movement caused a hair to fall and contaminate the crime scene. He answered without looking at caller ID. “Hello?”

“Is this William Graham?”

“Yes.”

“This is Sergeant Peter Nickles of the Nuorleans police department.”

Will sighed, “Is it Richy or George?”

“It’s your brother Richard.”

“Did he injure anyone while he was drunk?”

“No, but he is a little bruised, a car hit him. Not hard enough to need medical attention but he’s got a nasty bruise.”

“As long as he didn’t hurt anyone I don’t really care. Can I give you a credit card number?” The others were watching him but he was examining the fingers of the victims.

“Well, it’s not that easy. Because of the number of times he’s done this he needs to be released into someone’s custody.”

“What about George? If it’s just a walk out can’t he do it?”

“Your brother George is under house arrest with an ankle monitor as part of his probation.”

“Of course he is. What about our brother Alex?” he asked. Someone had cut their nails post mortem.

“He said that he can’t come to a police precinct during his mayoral campaign.”

“Can’t he pretend it’s a meet and greet?” asked Will more to himself than the man. “I’ll work on him. I’m at a crime scene.”

“Where are you?” the man said slowly, clearly wondering why Will would tell a cop he was at a crime scene.

“I’m a profiler for the FBI. I’m currently standing next to a puddle of blood in Washington DC.”

“Oh!” said the man. “I was going to say, your poor father: three criminals and a politician.”

“Wouldn’t that just make it four criminals?” Will asked. The man laughed and Will said, “My brother will come and he can pay the fine.”

“Thank you, Mr. Graham, you have a good day.”

Will hung up and shut his eyes. He breathed out slowly and felt the others leaving him he heard the click of the door closing behind them. Finally he opened his eyes and watched the crime play out, walking around the scene to view it all. He opened the door and said, “This wasn’t a crime of passion. The killer had been watching them. How else would he know exactly where their hidden knife block was? But he came in uninvited through a window so he wasn’t someone who would know that from time spent in their company. They both fought him. He cut their fingernails but there might still be trace DNA to be found. This wasn’t about money but there was some information he wanted. While it wasn’t passionate it was brutal and he wanted it to be. They were both conscious when strung up which means he’s strong, strong enough to restrain one person while hanging another.” He looked around, glancing but not actually looking any of the agents in the face.

“I thought you said you were an only child?” said Zeller.

“You said I was an only child. I simply said that middle children, like my brother Alex, become politicians. I need to call him.” Turning to Jack he said, “That’s all I have for you right now. I’ll take the family drama outside. Call me if you want me to come back in.”

He stripped off the protective gear outside the crime scene and left the house, going out on to the sidewalk. Outside he took a deep breath of the cool afternoon air and pulled up his brother’s number on his phone. He remembered his father’s advice growing up: don’t grind your teeth that hurts you not them and remember that you’re the smartest. He hit send and breathed through his nose.

Alex picked up saying, “Billy! How are you?”

He breathed in through his nose and out through his mouth and didn’t grind his teeth. “I’m fine. You know why I’m calling. You need to pick Richy up.”

“I’m on the campaign trail. I can’t go to the cop shop. Call Daddy or I’ll call Daddy.”

“No, we’re not calling Daddy. He gets paid hourly. You’re not gonna make him leave work.”

“Richy’s his kid.”

“Yeah, and he’s your Daddy,” Will reminded him. “You’re gonna go and pay his fine and take him back to his apartment. You can shout at him as much as you like. You can do whatever you like but first you’re gonna pay and you’re gonna take him home.”

“Or what, Billy? You’re hundreds of miles away, what are you going to do?”

You're the smartest, Will reminded himself. "I'll ask all of my technologically savvy FBI colleagues to help me make a smear ad to send to your opponents. It'll say, 'Alex Graham cares more about winning elections than about doing the right thing. He was so concerned about his constituents' opinion that he made his sixty-four-year-old Daddy drag his butt to the city to hide the fact that he's related to a deadbeat. He's so concerned about his appearance that, while he makes politician money, he spends it on suits and it's his younger brother who makes sure their Daddy's heat stays on in the winter. And while his platform says he's a self-made man his younger brother did all his homework in high school. He didn't go to college, not because he was a hardworking blue-collar-boots-on-the-ground kinda guy but because he wasn't smart enough. Alex Graham cares about election, not people. He's a liar and he's not that bright. Don't vote for Alex Graham.' That's what I'm going to do, Alex. And later tonight I'm gonna talk to Daddy. I'll know if he's covering for you. I always know. If Daddy has to bail Richy that ad is going to air. And, the next time you wonder why Daddy likes 'the freak' best, remember this moment." He hung up without waiting for the answer. He felt the eyes on his back and he breathed in through his nose. As he turned he saw Jack, Beverly, Price and Zeller there. "I'm not good at social cues," he says, "But that was mean, right? He can't miss that that was mean, right?"

Beverly laughed and said, "Will, that was brutally cruel."

"Good," said Will focusing on a spot over her shoulder. "Someone needs to get Richy from lock up."

"Your brother is Alex Graham? The Mayor of New Orleans?" asked Price.

Will nodded and said, "See, Beverly, sometimes the oldest isn't the responsible one. Sometimes the oldest is a drunk, the next one's a cattle rustler, followed by a politician and a criminal profiler with a personality disorder."

"No wonder you're the favorite," said Beverly.

Will huffed a laugh, "Yeah. Jack, you need me or am I done?"

"No, you're done, Will. Go home to your dogs."

Will nodded, "Thanks." He drove home with the windows open, listening to Leonard Cohen, still breathing in through his nose and out through his mouth. He hated his brothers. If all three of them died tomorrow it would upset Will only because he would have to take time off to help his dad plan the funerals. At home, Will unlocked the door and the dogs came out to greet him. He dropped to his knees to hug and stroke them. "My boys."

They pushed against him and nuzzled his sides. He accepted their affection for what it was: conditional. They loved him because he took care of them. But wasn't it simpler that way? They gave him the affection, attention and company he needed without ever causing him heart ache. They never asked for anything he couldn't give. They didn't want eye contact or deep emotional connections, they didn't care if he was awkward, or if his mind was elsewhere. They never called him Billy or made him do their homework. As long as he fed them, played with them and let them run free over the fields they looked at him like he was

the best thing on Earth. They thought he was significant. He couldn't imagine ever being a father, children confused him and look what children could grow up to be.

He stayed on the ground for a couple of minutes, just sitting with them. He finally stood and said, "Let's get you guys some dinner." Inside he put kibble in their bowls and straightened the already clean kitchen. It was usually clean but it was doubly clean as he had been planning on cooking for Hannibal. He took a fast shower and once he was dried and dressed he texted Hannibal, "I'm home so come over whenever is good for you." In the kitchen he took the bottle of red wine he had stored in the fridge and opened it, leaving it to breathe of the counter.

He put his latest motor on the coffee table and got his tools and the phone. Sitting cross legged on the floor he dialed his father's number. His father picked up on the second ring. "Hi, Will, I'm just cleaning up from dinner. What are you up to?"

It only took Will two minutes to ascertain that Alex had picked up Richy and hadn't asked their dad for help. Then they talked about their days as Will worked on the motor and his cleaned pots and pans. His dad asked about his "noggin" and Will said, "It's better, not perfect but the neurologist says it'll get better with time. I'm not scared anymore. I don't feel like I need another lock on my door. I'm not sleepwalking so I'm good."

They chatted for a while longer and then a knock came at the door. "I have to go, Daddy, Hannibal is here with dinner."

"Okay, you go. I'll talk to you soon."

"Love you, Daddy."

"Love you too, honey."

He hung up and stood, going to the door he realized his hands were filthy. He hit the lock with his elbow and twisted the knob between his wrists. "Hi, sorry. My father and I were chatting. I lost track of time. Not the bad type of losing time, just the comfortable conversation variety."

"That is quite alright. Engine grease," said Hannibal.

"I'm not complimenting you're sense of smell when I'm covered in it. Come on in."

Hannibal was carrying several shopping bags. As he walked toward the kitchen he looked at the motor. "Do you have it running yet?"

"No, it was wrecked. I'm thinking of stripping it for parts. It only cost me twenty bucks. The mechanics are worth three times that." The dogs were all pushing against his legs, their own quiet version of hello.

Hannibal held the bags higher. "Do you have a boat to connect it to?"

"No, just the motor. I've been thinking about getting a boat. Some broken down thing to be a bigger project. The problem is you can buy a broken motor off eBay and have it shipped no

problem but with a boat they usually want you to pick it up at their house. And I don't like going to other people's houses." Will turned the taps on with his elbows and started to scrub his hands.

Hannibal was comfortable in his kitchen after his extending stay at the house. He opened cupboards and drawers getting things he wanted. "You could buy a new one."

"You could eat out at fancy restaurants every night of the week. That doesn't mean you want to."

"Do you enjoy the work that much?"

Will nodded as he scrubbed under his nails, using a nailbrush and lava soap, "I find it very calming."

"Jack Crawford called me."

"About my brothers?" Hannibal nodded. "Did he want to know if it would break me too much to work tomorrow?" Hannibal nodded as he pulled things out of his bags. Will saw the meat was packaged from Giant-Landover and said, "Isn't it nice that cooking for me is so much cheaper than cooking for your other friends?"

Hannibal laughed and said, "Yes, but I also care for you more so it equals out. It's cheaper but I put more thought into it."

Will smiled as he dried his hands. "You should let me cook you chili. You'd like it. It's the one really good thing I cook."

"Someday, when you're totally healthy, I will let you." Hannibal handed him a pint of heavy cream, "That should go into the refrigerator until later." He started to deftly put the meal into the works. It was all movement and motion to Will who didn't really understand what he was watching. It was too fast.

Will felt dizzy from watching. He looked away to put the cream into the fridge and said, "I have wine." He pointed at the open bottle. "I know nothing about wine. Sorry. I know that wine is important to you. But I think it's good wine. Alana gave it to me for Christmas. It's red and that goes with red meat and I got it out the fridge to warm up a little and I opened it so it can breathe, that's good, right?"

"Most good, modern wines do not need to breathe. The simple act of pouring the wine aerates it. However, I always like to decant wine for the ritual." Looking at the bottle he smiled, "It's a very good wine."

"You can't possibly know every single wine available," said Will. He got wine glasses from the cupboard.

"I know it's a very good wine because I gave it to Dr. Bloom six months ago for her birthday before I knew that she drinks beer not wine and then she gave it to you two months ago not knowing that you do not habitually drink."

What the conversation with his father had begun that comment completed. Will started to laugh and Hannibal joined him. Feeling amused and contented right from the top of his head to the soles of his feet he asked, “Are you serious? I can’t tell if you’re serious.”

“I am completely serious. It’s from an artisan winery in Italy. It will pair very well with the stew.”

“We can’t tell Alana,” Will laughed as he started to pour, “say when.”

Hannibal laughed. “No, Will, fill to there.” He pointed at a spot on the glass. “That is the appropriate level of red wine for that glass. It’s not a matter of choice.”

“I’m always just handed a glass. I only drink in company. I don’t go to bars.”

“What about when you have guests?” asked Hannibal.

Will shook his head, “My dad will have a beer on a sunny day if we’re fishing. He never drinks with dinner. You and he are the only people who’ve ever been here as dinner guests. Alana has been over here a few times but never for a meal.” He handed one of the glasses to Hannibal. “Cheers,” he said.

“No one else? You make such good chili I would have thought you would want to share that.”

“I don’t like people in my space. Only four people are allowed here: you, my dad, Alana and Abigail once she gets out.” Hannibal gave him a slight smile and Will looked away and took a sip of his wine. “That is very nice.”

“It should be. It was a gift for a close friend on her thirtieth birthday.”

Will laughed. “We can’t tell Alana,” he repeated.

“Jack said your brother was arrested for public drunkenness. Is that why you don’t drink?”

Will shook his head, “Men in my family don’t do well with alcohol. I have enough social problems without adding alcoholism. I’ll buy a six pack of Sam Adams in the summer and have a drink on the porch with my dogs in nice weather but a six pack will last me all season. It tastes nice on a hot day but I don’t crave it. What did you say to Jack?”

“That I am not your doctor. I was your doctor when you appeared to have a mental illness. I said that I was hired to clear you for the field and am now a consultant for cases not you. I told him that, if he really wanted my opinion on your mental health, I believe the biggest challenge to your mental health is not your brother’s drinking problem but your habitual exposure to fear and distress that Jack inflicts upon you. And I told him that you should be removed from field work but not for this reason.”

“I never had nightmares before I started the work and now, even without the fever, I’m still dreaming. When I teach, when I show students crime scene photos, I can sleep easily. It’s having the body in the room. I tried to quit during the Angel Maker case. He guilted me into staying. I hate my job. I like being a teacher. Jack is not allowed in my space.” He looked at Hannibal’s busy hands and asked, “Can I help you at all?”

“Yes, there is a loaf of bread in the bag. Would you please slice it?”

Will said, “Sure, butter?”

“There is butter in the bag.”

“You don’t even trust my butter?” asked Will with a laugh.

“I wasn’t sure you would have any.”

Will smiled as he got a knife and a cutting board. “Do you think I can’t feed myself?” He started to cut the still-warm bread. It smelled delicious.

“I look at your dogs: well groomed, exercised and well fed and I know you can feed yourself. But I’m not sure you do.” Will laughed. Hannibal looked at him with a fond expression and Will went back to the bread. “You don’t make eye contact even in social settings.”

Will felt sad. He knew how the conversation went: you don’t; you won’t; you can’t; I give up. But with Hannibal maybe it will be different. “Does that make you uncomfortable?”

“Do you not make eye contact because you’re uncomfortable in my presence?” Will didn’t look up but shook his head. “Are you comfortable in my presence?” It was different question if only slightly. Will noticed the distinction and thought that Hannibal understood him better than anyone other than his father.

“Yes, I invited you here. I like your company.”

“Then why should it make me uncomfortable or distressed?”

“Good,” said Will. He left half the loaf uncut. They wouldn’t eat all of it and it would go stale if cut. Will got a table knife that could pass as a butter knife. He could have been embarrassed that he didn’t have a real butter knife to use with a man he had never seen out of a three piece suit but Hannibal liked him so Will didn’t worry about it.

“You should buy a boat. I wouldn’t mind going to someone’s house with you. I think it would make your life happier.”

“Thank you. I would like one.”

“I only ask that you invite me out on it once it’s done.”

Will smiled, “Okay. Deal. I have a boatshed out on the lake. It came with the land.”

“How many acres do you own?” asked Hannibal, tasting the stew.

“Right around forty. The house was pretty run down when I got it. The land cost more but it’s such nice land.”

“And you wanted a place that was yours after not having one as a child.”

Will nodded, “Yeah. The house was a nice project and it’s mine, no one else’s.”

“You spend so much time with ghosts and there are none here because no one has lived here like you do.” It wasn’t a question.

“I know who I am here because there’s no one to imagine.”

It wasn’t a traditional stew as it didn’t take much time to cook. Hannibal got bowls from the cupboard; he didn’t plate them with a flourish. Perhaps he felt the food spoke for itself, perhaps it was in deference to Will’s simple kitchen. Will brought the wooden cutting board to the table and got soup spoons and paper napkins. He let the dogs out into the yard knowing they would beg at the table if allowed to stay in the room.

The stew was delicious and Will realized that he hadn’t eaten at all that day. He laughed, “What?” asked Hannibal.

“I can’t feed myself: I forgot to eat today.”

Hannibal joined him in laughing. “A boat might help focus you.”

Will nodded and buttered a slice of bread. “This is delicious, thank you.”

“I’m glad you like it. I actually have a favor to ask you and am buttering you up.”

“Consider me buttered.”

“I have a patient who will not accept a referral. She has romantic feelings for me. I thought I might take a leaf from your book.”

Will blinked a few times before saying, “Are you asking me to be your pretend boyfriend?”

“Yes, I think so. But I would say partner. Boyfriend always sounds so young to me.”

“You don’t want to go with the tried and true ‘girlfriend in Canada’?”

“I think my patient needs a little more proof. A man would do more to dissuade her and help her move on to another therapist, a woman this time.”

Will laughed and glanced up from his soup. Hannibal was smiling at him and Will watched his jaw as he said, “Well, you kept my secret from my dad, you nursed me for weeks and you promised to come help me get a boat so I would be a terrible friend if I said no.”

“We do not have a tally, Will, this is not tit for tat.”

“But I’d like to help you, if I can. So what are we doing?”

Hannibal laid out a very simple plan and finished by saying, “You can embellish it. You have an amazing imagination.”

“Make it my design,” Will said sarcastically. He wondered if Hannibal knew how Will’s imagination worked and if he knew how easy it would be for Will to put himself in the headspace of Hannibal’s fictional lover and on the other hand, how hard.

“Your design?” asked Hannibal.

“It’s something I say to my students, something I say to myself at crime scenes.”

“You’ve never said it aloud.”

Will smiled, “Glad to know I haven’t totally lost it.”

“Do you feel like you’re ‘losing it’?” asked Hannibal using Will’s phrase.

“I feel less comfortable, happy and even than I did when I started working with Jack. But I don’t feel like I’m losing anything but my happy, quiet little life. I wasn’t looking for this. I didn’t want to go back into the field.”

“So ask to be relieved from fieldwork,” suggested Hannibal. “Go back to lecturing full time.”

“I tried to; I miss my quiet little life.”

“I’ve told you before, Will, you are my friend and I care more about you than the lives you save. Reconsider quitting.” Will smiled.

Finishing his stew he said, “I’ll think about it. This was amazing. You could whip up a feast in your sleep, couldn’t you? You made this in my normal, unfussy kitchen with none of your special equipment.”

“You can walk for miles and miles in your sleep. I have to have some talent.”

Will laughed, “True.” He picked up the now empty bowls. “And what a talent it is.”

Hannibal smiled and said, “I was planning on a simple dessert. However it would be a shame to let this wine go to waste. Otherwise you will put it back in the fridge and let it turn to vinegar.”

“No I won’t; you’ll be over here for dinner before that happens,” Will said.

“We should put it to use tonight.” Hannibal stood and said, “There’s just enough left and I’m cooking with it which will remove the alcohol. You’re father will not be the only Graham man to go to bed sober.” Will started to clean the dishes and pans as Hannibal removed strawberries and a cake that smells freshly baked. Hannibal took the pot with the stew and got Tupperware from the cupboard above the microwave. He put the stew into the Tupperware and said, “Now I know that you will eat dinner tomorrow.” He opened the fridge and said, “I’m glad I brought butter: you only have margarine.” He picked up the tub, clearly meaning to move it to make room for the stew and said, “It feels like it’s become liquid.”

“Oh don’t-” Will started but it was too late.

“Not margarine, just worms,” said Hannibal having removed the lid.

“Sorry. Live bait.”

“You have lunch meat, mustard, bread, milk, orange juice, cream that I brought and live bait. That’s all that’s in your fridge.”

“There’s Hot Pockets and a pizza in the freezer,” said Will. “I was going to go shopping today to buy stuff to cook you dinner.”

Hannibal gave a sad sigh and said, “Consider this butter as an investment in your future health.” He put the butter and the stew into the fridge and shut the door. “You must take better care of yourself.”

“I really thought I had some butter in there,” said Will.

“Jack Crawford and the FBI aren’t going to take care of you. You dislike it when others treat you like you can’t take care of yourself. If you don’t want someone else to take care of you then you must take care of yourself.” Will nodded, “Buy some vegetables.”

Will nodded again and took the empty pot from where Hannibal had put it down to soak it in the sink. “I will.”

“Consider leaving the field.”

“Okay,” Will said. Drying his hands he asked, “Can I help with dessert?”

“If you would wash and cut up the strawberries that would be very helpful.” Will got a sieve and brought the strawberries to the sink to wash them as Hannibal got a clean saucepan and sugar from Will’s own cupboard. At least he had sugar. As he stirred the mixture in the pan he said, “I’m going to set this on fire; don’t panic: it’s wholly my design.” Will laughed at that as he started to cut the strawberries. He popped one into his mouth and sighed happily. “There is not much scientific proof about organic food being better for you. Only organic strawberries have been unarguably proven to be better.” He tilted the pan slightly toward the flame and it caught light. Will couldn’t help but cringe back a bit. Hannibal did it several times. “I’m burning off the alcohol. We want the flavor not the intoxication.” He stirred the mixture and added the fruit as Will cut it. He also ate a strawberry, “Some ingredients can be perfect without any modification whatsoever.” And once all the strawberries were covered in the mixture he put a lid over the pan and went to the fridge. He retrieved the cream from the fridge and got a bowl and whisk. As he whipped the cream Will heard a low whine.

He saw Charlie at the door and said, “Go play, baby. You can come in once we’re done with dinner.”

“It’s fine, they’ll be okay without the meat around.”

“You sure? You’re not an animal person but you’re always so good with them.”

“I dislike animals. But they’re yours, Will, that makes them more than animals.”

Will tutted, “You mean that because they’re mine you have to put up with them.”

“Because they’re yours I willingly put up with them,” corrected Hannibal. Will laughed. “Let them in, you like them. I’m not particularly fond of them but I don’t dislike them.”

“Thanks,” said Will and went to the door. Opening it, he whistled and the dogs all came in. They herded into the kitchen and explored Will, nudged him and passed by, going directly into the living room.

The cream in the bowl became solid and Hannibal moved on to cubing the cake, “Would you kindly get out bowls and turn the heat off on the stove?”

“Sure,” Will turned off the stove and got bowls. He became a spectator again, watching Hannibal create dessert. He just got them glasses of ice water; that he could do. He felt inadequate to help Hannibal even in his own kitchen but Hannibal smiled at him as he accepted the glass. They went back to the table to eat and Will said, “This is delicious but I really did intend to cook and we don’t even need food. Now that we know I’m not crazy we don’t have my twice a week appointments to chat. We’re friends, right? I’ve never been good at knowing but I don’t think I’m wrong. You moved in when I was sick.”

Hannibal nodded, “I never thought of you as my patient. You’re a friend; I was simply helping you. I never thought you were crazy: I thought you were mentally ill. Do you like the opera? I have two tickets for Saturday.”

“I’ve never been to the opera. I like music. Do I wear a suit? How sociable do I have to be?”

“Yes, a suit. We’ll keep social interactions to the bare minimum and leave as soon as it’s over.”

“I don’t want you to cut your evening short.”

“I would rather go out to a late supper with you.”

“Are you sure? They’re your friends.”

“They are the people I have to dinner parties. There is a large difference. You, Alana and I do not a dinner party make. We need to make five more friends for me to throw a dinner party for friends. They are acquaintances. Come to the opera with me. There is a nice café by the opera house. You’ll like it.”

“Okay, so I’ll crash your patient’s appointment and then on Saturday we’ll go to the opera,” they fell to silence as they enjoyed their dessert and afterwards Will said, “This was amazing. Thank you.”

“You brought your company and fine wine to the table.”

Will laughed, “I knew it would be nice: it was a present from a good friend.”

Hannibal joined him in laughing and said, “Let me help you with the dishes.”

“No, no, you did the cooking. I’ll do the dishes. Besides, you have patients in the morning and an hour long drive in front of you. I don’t have class until 9:30 and I just walk over a field to get there.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive. Thank you again.” They stood and Will walked him to the door. The dogs came to say goodbye to Hannibal and Hannibal patted them gently, like he liked them.

And that meant more to Will than anything Hannibal could cook.

Works inspired by this one

(Podfic) Alcohol is Never the Answer by Azure_K_Mello, ventusprinceps

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